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VE AND GAY

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T. DUNDAS PILLANS

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H. F. Wreford
with fraternal greetings
from his old colleague
F.E.P.
Christmas 1909

VERSE GRAVE AND GAY

BY

T DUNDAS PILLANS

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Verse Grave and Gay.

Edmund Burke.

I.

High-Priest of Justice, whose prophetic voice
Across the chasm of a century rings
With fateful warnings both to mobs and kings:
Patriot, who spurn'd'st the placeman's venal choice,
And held'st thy way unmoved by sordid things,
For which the baser mortals sell their souls—
Thy great example shines a light to men
Throughout the ages, and while Time unrolls
His Sybil-scroll, thy name shall ever be
Entwined with faith and steadfast constancy.
Great in the Senate, mighty with the pen,
The Orient hailed thee saviour, while the West,
Bursting her bonds asunder, called thee blest
And Anarchy slunk trembling to his den.

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II.

We would, in times like these, acclaim with joy
The statesman who should scorn to bid for power,
With pledges fashioned to the changing hour,
A steadfast soul, pure gold without alloy.
Such was the patriot who in days of yore
Made our great England famous. Now, alas!
Fallen upon evil days, she knows no more
This breed of men; instead of such there pass
Across the stage vague phantoms, pallid ghosts,
Whose "philosophic doubt" and "open mind"
Palsy their action, while the embattled hosts
Of Anarchy advance in hope to find
Their victory sure, and Freedom's funeral knell
Is sounded, even in her ancient citadel.

Samuel Johnson.

Thou rugged Titan, 'neath that form uncouth
A great and noble nature lay enshrined;
And all the fruition of thy virile mind
Was lavished on thy master-passion, Truth.

Disraeli.

Derided, scorned, misunderstood, he rose
By force of genius and a will supreme,
Till full achievement of his youthful dream
Shed light resplendent on his journey's close.

A Scottish Gentleman.

(*James Dunnachie, Esq., of Glenboig, Lanarkshire.*)

A stalwart frame that mocks the hand of Time,
Compact of dignity and manly grace,
Active and keen, as when, in manhood's prime,
No kindly furrows marked his genial face,
But left unquenched the vigour of his race—
That splendid people who from barren soil
Have wrung the harvest of their strenuous toil,
And through the centuries kept the foremost place.
In mind as vigorous as in body sound,
Alert to "take occasion by the hand,"
A leader born to counsel and command;
With Industry's unsullied laurels crowned,
Well skilled in science and profound in art,
With—gift of gifts supreme—a loyal heart.

God and Mammon.

(*Southwark Bridge: Winter.*)

The great highway of commerce flows beneath,
Its turbid waters bearing on their breast
Grim argosies, that loom from out a wreath
Of steam and smoke and mist. The tide's unrest,
As swift it ebbs to the absorbing sea,
Is emblem fitting of the crowds that throng
The bridge, and come and go unceasingly.
In massed confusion, either bank along,
Mammon's vast temples through the vapours rise,
Piled tier on tier, vague, shadowy, immense;
While over turbid stream and vapours dense
The great cathedral greets the unclouded skies
In solemn grandeur; and the bell of prayer
Rings in sweet cadence through the frosty air.

Equality.

In Nature's kingdom all that tends to charm,
To elevate the mind and please the eye
Is endless variation. From the sky,
Now bathed in light, now gloomed with the alarm
Of gathering tempests, to the Alpine height
On which we gaze afar in awed delight,
Unequal contrasts hold the spirit bound,
And are the soul of beauty. Not the sight
Of desolate plains, extending to the round
Of earth's circumference in unbroken line,
Can bring man's nature near to the divine.
Even so the social order, from the strife
Of minds unequal rises high the sound
Of that majestic chorus, human life.

The Demagogue.

Thou shameless tonguester, whose malignant spell,
With practised cunning and infernal skill,
Sways the besotted multitude at will,
Evoking hatred from the depths of hell!
Shallow, adroit, unscrupulous, in all
The arts of demagogy subtly versed;
Fooling thy worshippers with wiles accurst,
Which lure thy dupes to their pre-destined fall,
With honeyed accents, but with heart of gall.
The great forerunners of thy evil line
Beside thy fell effulgence pale their fires,
And from the shades acclaim thee prince of liars,
Yielding precedence to thy powers malign,
Which Satan views with envy—but admires.

A Sunday Afternoon in Hyde Park.

High on his rostrum, o'er the motley crowd,
His felon-face distorted with the hate
Of all that's noble, holy, wise and great,
The atheist bawls his blasphemies aloud.
Ribald invective rushes forth like flame,
Searing the summer verdure as with blast
From hell, where demons stop their ears in shame,
And palsied o'er with terror, cower aghast
To hear this worm revile his Maker's name.
I turn away, and as the voice grows faint,
I hear from every tree the enraptured lays
Of happy songsters, trilling hymns of praise
To their Creator, banishing the taint
Of man's corruption from the leafy ways.

The "Gilded Fop."

The "Gilded Fop"—we know him well,
Lounger of Bond Street and Pall Mall,
His walk a Piccadilly crawl,
His mind a blank, his speech a drawl.

In pleasure's quest he saunters by,
A fashionable butterfly;
In soldier's or civilian's part,
A triumph of the tailor's art.

The monarch of the opera stall,
The dandy darling of the ball;
And in the realm of sport supreme,
From breezy moor to mountain stream.

But wheresoe'er his lot is cast,
His path is pleasant to the last;
And all that wealth and rank e'er gave
Is his, from cradle even to grave.

But hark! the country calls to arms,
The world is rocked with war's alarms,
Forth rush the youth from desk and shop,
Where shall we seek *thee*, "Gilded Fop"?

The smouldering virtues of his sires
Break forth anew in patriot fires,
Transfigured by stern duty's call,
He equals—nay, transcends them all.

He leaves his haunts of sloth and ease,
Crosses vast continents and seas,
In icy clime or torrid zone
To do—as those same sires have done

And writes afresh in words of gold
The glories of the days of old,
His fathers' deeds of derring-do,
From Agincourt to Waterloo.

In hunger, thirst, and wounds he shares;
Death on the stricken field he dares,
And sheds his blood to the last drop
For king and country—"Gilded Fop,"

We knew thee not when in Pall Mall,
Sauntering, we thought we knew thee well.
We know thee now, not as of old,
No "Gilded Fop," but *Heart of Gold.*

The New Defence.

Defending Counsel.—"I shall be able to show that the defendant (charged with fraud) has been stripped of every shilling by a money-lender."—*Recent case.*

In olden times, forensic lore
  A universal maxim had,
To bilk the claim of plaintiff sore
  And bolster up defences bad;
In absence of a valid plea,
  The wily barrister would choose
This weapon of chicanery:
  "Plaintiff's solicitor abuse."

In latter days, so wise we grew,
  Our father's precept we discard;
We need not such devices low
  The client's interest to guard;
The plaintiff's lawyer goes scot free
  Amid the law-court's wordy din,
And weak defence succeeds if we
  Can drag the money-lender in.

The forger sees the fatal chain
  Around him coiling, link by link;
His guilt is as the noon-day plain,
  His hopes within his bosom sink;

When lo! the "junior" prompts his "chief":
  "One card we hold this suit to win:
Our client *is* a patent thief,
  But—drag the money-lender in."

With eager hitch of silken gown,
  The learned counsel takes the cue;
He melts the stern judicial frown;
  The gaol fades from the prisoner's view;
"My Lud, my client's case I rest
  On this irrefutable plea—
His uncle's aunt was sore oppressed
  By money-lender's villany."

The stalwart prison-warders weep,
  The public heaves responsive groan;
The judge, upstarting from his sleep,
  Mumbles his charge in tearful tone.
From every breast the plea unlocks
  A tender thrill of sympathy;
The jury do not leave the box,
  But set the joyful prisoner free.

No more in sprightly suit for "breach"
  The charming plaintiff gains the day;
Defendant has within his reach
  A shield to turn her darts away;
The amorous correspondence fails
  The lady's rueful case to win,
Nor youth nor beauty aught avails—
  He drags the money-lender in.

He shows how every fervent vow,
  His sighs and promises so rife,
The arrows shot from Cupid's bow;
  His failure to make *her* his wife,
Were due to this, and this alone
  (Although to keep his troth he meant),
From some fell Jew of Marylebone
  He borrowed once at "cent. per cent."

Uncurbed the coiner piles his trade;
  The "Thimble-rigger" robs his dupe;
The burglar burgles undismayed;
  Rogues fleece unchecked the nincompoop;
On every hand the knaves enjoy
  The plunder they contrive to win.
If the smart lawyers they employ
  Can drag the money-lender in.

So now the golden age has come
  That saints and sages yearned to see;
The long-delayed millennium
  Which sets the pining captive free.
Hail, then, the day with joyous shout,
  Acclaim it with triumphal din,
In which to let the scoundrels *out*,
  We drag the money-lender *in*.

"The Labour Leader."

(*With apologies to Longfellow.*)

Under the famed Reformers' Tree
  The "Labour Leader" stands,
A blatant, brazen bounder he,
  With coarse and dirty hands;
And the bellowings of his strident voice
  Delight the listening bands.

His hair unkempt, his beard unshorn,
  His cheeks with envy wan;
His linen wet with unwashed sweat,
  He sows what hate he can;
And he robs his dupes and lives at ease,
  For he pays not any man.

Week in, week out, from morn till night,
  At the bar of the "Shirker's Arms,"
You can hear him spout with beery breath,
  While his boozy audience warms
With the glow of hate, and the fire of spite,
  At the spell of his hellish charms.

He goes on Sundays to the Park,
  And bawls his devilish creed,
The compound of a jaundiced mind,
  The spawn of hate and greed;
Uprooting every wholesome flower,
  And planting there a weed.

Spouting, malingering, hocussing—
  Onward through life he goes;
Each morning sees more beer imbibed,
  Each night a redder nose—
Mischief achieved has always marred
  Some honest man's repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee thou blatant fraud,
  For the lesson thou hast taught!
We know thee now for what thou art,
  And the evil thou hast wrought;
And every honest man shall strive
  To bring thy schemes to naught.

The Logical Cab Horse;

or,

Balaam's Ass Up-to-Date.

A Socialistic friend, my next door neighbour,
  Afflicts me often with his foolish prattle,
Descanting glibly on the "rights of labour,"
  His soul in arms and eager for the battle;
The fruits of industry, how'er they fall,
He vows that "labour" should annex them all.

The brain directing, and the skill supreme,
  The long prevision that conceives and plans,
Transforming into fact the poet's dream,
  With obstinate perversity he bans,
Assigning all that thought and genius yield
To those who wield the pick and till the field.

It chanced one night that at a neighbouring hall
  The "comrades" were to give an explanation
Of how they were prepared to settle all
  The ills which trouble this afflicted nation,
And introduce that Golden Age when men
Shall happy be—as cattle in a pen.

Eager to make a proselyte, he came
  And asked me to attend the coming function;
Mentioned the speaker—Hyndman was his name—
  The place not far removed from Clapham Junction.
The weather being bad, we hailed a hansom;
The sequel shows 'twas worth a monarch's ransom.

While speeding onward on our miry way,
  My friend beguiled the time with wild discourse
About the dawning of the glorious day
  (I marked the rapt attention of the horse)
When those who laboured all the gain should win,
And State soup tickets take the place of "tin."

At last, arriving at the appointed door,
  He handed cabby just the legal fare,
Who, *more suo*, cursed and asked for more.
  My friend received the invective with a stare:
A Socialist objects to being "done,"
And bars his theories from "Number One."

'Tis known to those who study Holy Writ,
  That once a prophet, in the days of old,
Was put to shame in nimbleness of wit
  By long-eared quadruped, whose words of gold,
Had they been heeded, would have spared the sage
A fruitless journey and his monarch's rage.

To judge by some strange utterances we hear,
  That ass is wanted to instruct us now;

The speakers, long in wind as he in car,
  To his superior intellect must bow;
The sapient instructors of the masses
Might profit by the example of some asses.

But to our tale! Just as we turned away,
  The horse who drew us found the power of speech,
And, with a slight preliminary neigh,
  Our kind attention did at once beseech.
We paused dumbfounded, and in great dismay,
To hear what this poor gee-gee had to say.

And thus the horse: "You say that he who toils
  In field or forge alone reward should gain;
Your lofty soul in high disdain recoils
  From recompensing enterprise and brain.
I like the doctrine well, but 'twere a sin
To circumscribe it—WHERE DO I COME IN?

"The force was mine that drew you on your way;
  To me is therefore due the sole reward;
Give me the whole in beans and oats and hay,
  Or pasture green, to browse upon the sward.
As for the cabby, or the man who owns
The cab they are but capitalistic drones."

After the quadruped had made an end
  Of his most logical discourse, I turned
To mark the effect produced upon my friend,
  And note if he the lesson well had learned.
But all in vain—I found the man had fled,
Confounded quite by what the horse had said

The New Sennacherib.

(*Written when Petersham Wood was threatened with "improvement" by a neighbouring Municipality.*)

Boss Bumble came down, like a wolf on the fold,
When the beeches were glowing in umber and gold;
And he marked for destruction each beautiful tree,
And chortled the while in his Philistine glee.

For the woods they were wild, and the sweetbriar grew
As it listed, untrammelled; and wood-pigeons flew
Through the network of branches when evening was still,
And the twilight grew deeper on Petersham Hill.

And when Night's dusky mantle was spread o'er the world,
And the wood-rose its delicate petals had furled,
The nightingale's song broke the stillness of night,
And flooded the woodland with notes of delight.

But Bumble was wroth, for he loved not to see
Woods growing at random and birds flying free;
And the moss-covered paths were as gall to his soul,
And he yearned with black asphalt to cover the whole;

To cut down the beeches and level the glade;
To straighten the footpaths that wantonly strayed;
And where erst the clematis and eglantine grew,
To erect cockney arbours all painted bright blue.

So the Council assembled, and forthwith decreed,
That the work of improvement should promptly proceed
And the arbours aforesaid erected should be.
Where cads could philander and bounders have tea.

But the Angel of Public Opinion arose,
And smote in his anger his Philistine foes;
And the ballot's stern verdict completed their doom,
And consigned them (Mu-ni-ci-pal-ee) to the tomb.

So the woods are still wild, and the wood-pigeons coo;
And the roses still bloom under skies that are blue,
And the nightingale's love-song enraptures us still,
When the summer moon shines over Petersham Hill.

A Christmas Elegy

"Thousands of over-fattened bullocks and pigs are now, by slow stages, approaching the slaughter-houses. Countless thousands of turkeys and geese are awaiting their doom." (*Letter in daily paper.*)

What shrouds the chicken-run in deepest gloom?
  Why stand the kine dejected in the field?
Why is the pig-sty silent as the tomb,
  Where erst in blithesome tones the piglings squealed?

Why do the geese with ruffled feathers mope?
  Why squat the pensive turkeys on the ground?
Why have the simple sheep abandoned hope,
  And, huddled close, emit no cheerful sound?

What mean these signs of universal woe,
  That o'er the face of mournful Nature brood?
Why do the cows give forth a plaintive low,
  And pheasants creep in silence through the wood?

It is because the season draweth near,
  When savage Man delights to gorge and quaff,
When butchers' shops bedecked with bays appear,
  And e'en Misanthropy itself will laugh.

But all the turkeys that majestic strut,
  And gobble forth in joy the pride of life,
Foresee on them the gates of mercy shut,
  And every sheep anticipates the knife.

What boots it that prismatic colours deck
  The pheasant, or that geese have snowy down ?
They feel a fell sensation in the neck,
  And dream of decking poultry-shops in town.

Yon beefy bullock who has cropped the grass
  On summer days beneath the leafy shade,
Anticipates the time when he shall pass,
  And into juicy joints and steaks be made.

The lusty porker in his bed of straw
  Grunts when he thinks of pleasures that have been,
Foreboding the inexorable law
  That dooms him to the sausages machine.

And one and all devoutly wish that Man,
  In place of plunging into festive riot,
Would drink potations from the water-can,
  And sate himself with vegetarian diet.

Meanwhile, until that blest millennium come,
  The brute creation will at Christmas mourn,
Standing in abject terror, stricken dumb,
  And full of dire forebodings, muse forlorn.

The Suffragettes.

In olden time 'twas wisely said, "The hand
That rocks the cradle gives the world command,"
Now, woman, from her proud position hurled,
Abjures the cradle while she rocks the world.

Robin Hood Up-to-Date.

"A famous man was Robin Hood,"
So Wordsworth sang in other days,
And we can boast of one as good,
As worthy of the bays.

But not as in the days of yore,
Beneath the leafy forest glade,
The home of antlered deer and boar,
Our bandit plies his trade.

Amidst the busy haunts of men
He has his unassailed retreat,
Securer than in Sherwood glen
Ensconced in Downing Street.

The long-bow Robin drew with power,
And his successor does the same.
In this the hero of the hour
Eclipses Robin's fame.

Vicarious benevolence
  Was Robin's altruistic plan,
He took a toll from affluence
  To aid his brother-man.

Even so our modern bandit bold
  Seizes the rich man by the throat,
And hands what cash his pockets hold
  To those who have the vote.

But Robin's means, though rough and rude,
  To carry out his "simple plan,"
Were born of strength and fortitude,
  And stamped him as a Man.

Beneath the blithesome greenwood tree
  He took his life in both his hands,
And scorned the law's chicanery
  In levying his demands.

A safer way our Rob pursues,
  He brings his methods up to date,
And levies his rapacious dues
  By sanction of the State.

Lurking in snug official room,
  He plunders whomso'er he will,
And seals his luckless victim's doom
  Within a Budget Bill.

The New Cleon.

In days gone by, when I was young,
  I delved industrious in the mine,
And would have died, unwept, unsung,
  Obscurest of a nameless line.

But tired of groping like a mole,
  On honest work to ply my hand,
I struck a richer vein than coal,
  Which Nature placed at my command.

Instead of wielding spade and pick,
  I found my tongue a better tool;
I learnt the spouter's facile trick,
  And practised on the witless fool.

To sow the seeds of mutual hate,
  To eat the bread I do not earn,
I find a more congenial fate
  Than mining coals for fools to burn.

A hundred platforms hear my voice,
  Across the land my words resound;
And, oh! it makes my heart rejoice
  To see the jingling plate go round.

My stock-in-trade is scant and small,
  I suck the brains of other men ;
Banalities from Marx I bawl.
  And steal the fruits of Bebel's pen.

But still it matters not to me
  So long as I can wittols find,
Who perfect wisdom in me see,
  And depth profound of soul and mind.

And when the dupes that I delude
  In workless, wageless want repine,
I bear their woes with fortitude ;
  Their hunger's no concern of mine.

With brazen front and leathern lung,
  I rave and rant throughout the land,
And prove how well a reckless tongue
  And empty head go hand in hand.

The Socialist Agapemone.

In early Christian days the Pagans saw
  The fruits of faith mature in deeds of love,
And marked with wonder the ennobling law,
  Lighting earth's gloom with radiance from above;
    "See," they exclaimed, "like brother bound to brother,
    How Christians show their love for one another."

This old evangel for two thousand years
  Has graced the world with charity divine,
But now a gospel strange and wild appears,
  Teaching new doctrines, devilish and malign.
    Love wings her flight from earth disconsolate,
    And yields her kingdom to the powers of Hate.

The apostles of this foul and monstrous creed,
  Like famished wolves or carrion beasts obscene,
A reptile crew, the spawn of lust and greed,

Snarl at each other—tigers gaunt and lean
  That in the jungle seize their trembling prey,
  Are not more filled with ravening hate than they.

Glasier resigns and, spluttering with rage,
  Denounces Grayson as a pirate foul;
Dips pen in vitriol, and stains the page
  With screechings worthy of a midnight owl;
    Blatchford he bans as Grayson's fell abettor,
    And proves himself Thersites to the letter.

Blatchford the compliment returns in kind,
  Calls Hardie a "Mahatma," and would know
If man or fetish one in him may find;
  Backward and forward the invectives go;
    Confusion fills the air and dins the ears,
    Quite a demoniac "music of the spheres."

Grayson the combat joins; romancing Wells
  Girds at them all, while merry-andrew Shaw
Unpleasant "truths" about his "comrade" tells,
  And with full-blown conceit lays down the law;
    Since Pandemonium was the home of sin
    Nor heaven, nor earth, nor hell heard such a din.

The "touchiness" of Hyndman, Grayson's failings,
  The "dogmatism" of Quelch and Blatchford's faults,
Are all combined, says Bernard in his railings,

In Wells, the victim of his fierce assaults;
"A crankier comrade there is not alive,
Meeting another; I should not survive."

Meanwhile the ancient order stands supreme,
While like the fabled "dragons of the prime,"
These nightmare goblins of an evil dream
Tear and devour each other in their slime;
Ruin, which gods and men delight to see,
O'erwhelms this Satan's Agapemone.

A Lay of Abbreviated Front Names.

When William Sikes to robbery took,
His full front name he straight forsook,
And once embarked on courses ill,
Whittled it promptly down to "Bill."

The blatant bounders, who discourse
With raucous voices, harsh and hoarse,
On Labour's fancied wrongs and woes,
Pursue the path that William chose.

If one of them was christened Peter,
He deems it more discreet and sweeter
The final letter to delete,
And thus to masquerade as "Pete."

Thomas perforce must go one better,
In vain for him to drop a letter;
One syllable must sever from
His Christian name to make it "Tom."

Another, known as Benjamin,
Commits an even greater sin;
Sheds two whole syllables, and then
Electrifies the world as "Ben."

Bartholomew has greater range
Than all the rest to work the change;
Three syllables must first depart
Before his name's reduced to "Bart."

But he whose parents called him John,
The horns of a dilemma's on;
And he has no resource, alack!
Except to take the name of "Jack."

But I should greatly like to know
Why they truncate their fore-names so
And why these engineers of strikes
Should follow in the path of Sikes.

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